

## Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) — Congressional Activity Brief

### TOP STORY

GOVERNMENT REFORM / DOGE

### Coons Leads Democratic Push Against DOGE-Driven Cuts to Federal Workforce, Cites Delaware Impact

Sen. Coons used Sunday talk show appearances and a Monday floor statement to criticize the Department of Government Efficiency's latest round of proposed agency restructuring, claiming it would eliminate approximately 1,200 federal positions in Delaware across USDA, SSA, and VA offices. Coons called the cuts 'reckless and ideologically driven' and announced plans to introduce a Federal Workforce Protection Act that would require congressional approval before mass reductions-in-force. He specifically cited the New Castle County VA facility and Dover Air Force Base civilian support roles as at risk. [STAFF VERIFY exact bill filing date and number — expected this week.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Dr. Katz can acknowledge the need to protect Delaware jobs while pivoting to his proven record of government reform — drawing on his Delaware Senate legislation establishing an Independent Council to develop a Five Year Plan to Restructure and Reorganize State Government, which took a methodical, data-driven approach to right-sizing government rather than blanket opposition to reform. Frame: 'Coons reflexively defends bureaucratic bloat. I've actually written the legislation to make government leaner and smarter — with a plan, not just talking points.'

### DEFENSE & PENTAGON

APPROPRIATIONS

### Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Prepares for FY2027 Markup Season — Coons Signals Priorities

As Ranking Member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Coons released a statement Friday outlining Democratic priorities for the FY2027 defense spending bill, emphasizing shipbuilding, military family housing, and cybersecurity workforce development. He specifically flagged Dover Air Force Base C-5M maintenance funding and continued investment in the Delaware National Guard readiness center modernization. The subcommittee is expected to begin hearings the week of March 16.

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Dr. Katz should acknowledge Coons' work on Dover AFB funding as a baseline expectation for any Delaware senator, then pivot to Katz's stronger stance on Commander-in-Chief authority and defense readiness. Per Katz's veterans platform, emphasize his commitment to a VA Advanced Medical Facility in Southern Delaware — something Coons has not championed — and his call for robust military investment as essential to 'preserving global peace and international stability.' Frame: 'Protecting Dover AFB isn't leadership — it's the bare minimum. Real leadership means building the military capacity our adversaries fear.'

#### DEFENSE BUDGET

### [STAFF VERIFY] Coons Position on FY2027 Defense Topline Number

Reports indicate Senate Democrats are coalescing around a FY2027 defense topline of approximately \$895-905 billion, roughly tracking the administration's expected request. Coons has not yet publicly committed to a specific number. Staff should monitor whether Coons breaks with progressive Democrats who are pushing for a freeze or cut to defense spending. His positioning here will signal how vulnerable he is on defense strength messaging.

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Drawing on Katz's strong defense platform and support for Commander-in-Chief authority, Katz should preemptively stake out a robust defense spending position above the Democratic baseline. Frame: 'While Senator Coons plays politics with our defense budget, I'll ensure our military has every dollar it needs to keep Americans safe. Peace comes through strength, not through partisan negotiation over our national security.'

#### RECENT LEGISLATION

#### HEALTHCARE

### Coons Cosponsors PRESCRIBE Act to Address Healthcare Provider Shortages

Sen. Coons signed on as a cosponsor of the PRESCRIBE Act (S. 842), which would expand Medicare Graduate Medical Education (GME) slots by 5,000 over five years, with priority given to rural and underserved areas. The bill, introduced by Sen. Schatz (D-HI), was referred to the Finance Committee. Coons cited Delaware's physician shortage in southern Kent and Sussex counties as motivation. [STAFF VERIFY exact cosponsor date and current cosponsor count.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** This is prime territory for Dr. Katz. Per Katz's healthcare platform, he has spent 'over forty years of dedicated service to the U.S. healthcare industry' and

has specifically called for a paradigm shift toward prevention and integrated care. Katz also trained at and was recruited by Nemours/A.I. duPont, giving him direct credibility on physician workforce issues. Frame: 'Senator Coons puts his name on a bill someone else wrote. I've spent my entire career in the healthcare system — I don't need a lobbyist to explain the physician shortage to me. I've lived it, and I have the expertise to actually fix it.'

#### GOVERNMENT REFORM

### Coons Reintroduces Democracy and Anti-Corruption Reforms — ETHICS Act

Coons reintroduced the ETHICS Act (S. 917), which would strengthen financial disclosure requirements for senior government officials, ban stock trading by members of Congress, and enhance Office of Government Ethics enforcement powers. This is the third consecutive Congress Coons has introduced a version of this legislation. The bill has 12 Democratic cosponsors but no Republican support. [STAFF VERIFY bill number and exact reintroduction date.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Dr. Katz can outflank Coons on ethics reform by citing his own Delaware Senate legislative record — specifically Katz SB 141 (Comprehensive Lobby Reform, Financial Reporting, Conflict of Interest Prohibitions) and his bill prohibiting registered lobbyists from performing official duties for state government. Frame: 'I didn't just talk about ethics reform — I wrote the bills and fought my own party establishment to pass them. Senator Coons introduces feel-good legislation that goes nowhere while lobbyists continue to write policy in Washington. I have the reform credentials he can only pretend to have.'

#### IMMIGRATION

### [STAFF VERIFY] Coons Activity on ICE/Immigration Enforcement Legislation

Staff should verify whether Coons has signed onto any Democratic caucus letters or legislation in the past week related to ICE operations, border enforcement funding, or immigration court backlogs. Reports suggest Senate Democrats are circulating a letter opposing expanded ICE detention facility funding in the DHS appropriations bill. Coons' position on this will be critical given Delaware's proximity to immigration policy debates in the Philadelphia metro corridor.

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Per Katz's platform supporting secure borders and strong ICE enforcement, any Coons opposition to ICE funding or detention capacity is a clear contrast opportunity. Frame: 'While Senator Coons sides with open-border Democrats who want to

defund ICE, I'll ensure our border agents and immigration officers have the resources to enforce our laws and keep Delaware communities safe.'

## APPROPRIATIONS & DELAWARE FUNDING

### FEDERAL FUNDING

## FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Awarded to Delaware — \$4.7M for Coastal Resilience

FEMA announced a \$4.7 million Hazard Mitigation Grant Program award to Delaware for coastal resilience projects in Sussex County, including beach replenishment and storm drainage upgrades in Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach. Coons and Sen. Blumenthal (CT) issued a joint statement praising federal investment in coastal states. Coons' office will likely schedule a Sussex County press event this week. [STAFF VERIFY exact grant amount, announcement date, and whether Coons personally secured an earmark or this was a competitive award.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Drawing on Katz's energy and environment platform, where he authored Delaware's National Scenic Byway legislation (Katz SB 241) to preserve open spaces and natural landscapes, Katz should frame himself as equally committed to Delaware's coastline and environment — but with a private-sector efficiency lens. Frame: 'I'm glad Delaware is getting coastal protection funding — I've fought to protect Delaware's landscapes my entire career. But Senator Coons never asks the harder question: why does it cost \$4.7 million for what should be routine infrastructure maintenance? Washington's spending problem starts with zero accountability for how your tax dollars are used.'

### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION

## [STAFF VERIFY] Status of Dover AFB Military Construction Projects in FY2026 Omnibus

Staff should confirm the status of military construction funding for Dover Air Force Base included in the FY2026 spending package, including the reported \$38M for an Airmen Dormitory Complex and \$12M for a base perimeter security upgrade. Confirm whether Coons secured these as earmarks or whether they originated from the Air Force's unfunded priorities list. This is important for messaging — Coons will claim credit regardless of origin.

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Per Katz's veterans and defense platform, Dover AFB investment is non-negotiable. Katz should preemptively support all Dover AFB MILCON while noting: 'Every Delaware senator should fight for Dover Air Force Base — that's table stakes. The difference is I'll also fight to ensure our military families at Dover have access to world-class

healthcare and that our veterans in southern Delaware finally get the advanced VA medical facility they've been promised.' This ties to Katz's specific proposal for a VA Advanced Medical Facility in Southern Delaware.

## FOREIGN POLICY & DIPLOMACY

IRAN / WAR POWERS

### Coons Calls for Congressional Authorization on Iran Policy Amid Rising Tensions

At a Friday Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Coons pressed administration officials on the legal basis for expanded military operations near Iran, arguing that any sustained military engagement requires a new Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). Coons stated that the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs do not cover current Iranian threat postures and warned against 'executive overreach.' He co-signed a bipartisan letter with Sen. Paul (R-KY) requesting a classified briefing on Iran contingency plans. [STAFF VERIFY hearing date, witnesses, and letter signatories.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** This is a key vulnerability for Coons. Drawing on Katz's platform supporting Commander-in-Chief authority and strong defense posture, Katz should frame Coons' position as weakening America's deterrence. Frame: 'Senator Coons wants to tie the President's hands while Iran accelerates its nuclear program. I believe in a strong Commander-in-Chief who can act decisively to protect Americans. Congressional oversight is important — congressional paralysis is dangerous. Coons' approach tells our adversaries that America will debate while they act.'

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

### [STAFF VERIFY] Coons Travel to Munich Security Conference or Recent CODEL

Staff should confirm whether Coons participated in any recent congressional delegations (CODELs) in late February or early March 2026, including the Munich Security Conference or any bilateral meetings related to his Foreign Relations Committee portfolio. Coons has historically been active in transatlantic diplomacy and Africa policy. Any taxpayer-funded travel should be documented for potential contrast on priorities (overseas vs. Delaware).

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** If confirmed, Katz can draw on his 'Patients Over Politics' theme: 'While Senator Coons jets around the world on taxpayer-funded trips, Delawareans are struggling with healthcare costs, housing prices that have surged 53% since 2018 (per Katz's

homeownership platform data), and an economy that isn't working for working families. Delaware needs a senator who shows up at home, not just at foreign conferences.'

## 2026 RACE CONTEXT

### CAMPAIGN INTELLIGENCE

#### **Race Snapshot: Coons vs. Katz (General: Nov. 3, 2026)**

Sen. Coons (D) is running for a third full term. Republican primary: Dr. Mike Katz vs. John Shulli — primary set for September 15, 2026. Delaware is historically Solid Democratic. Coons has missed 3.0% of Senate roll call votes since 2010. His legislative profile focuses on International Affairs (27%), Commerce (21%), and Labor (10%). Committees: Appropriations (Defense Subcommittee Ranking Member), Foreign Relations, Judiciary. No new public polling has emerged in the past week, though Coons' campaign filed Q1 pre-reporting showing continued strong fundraising from corporate PACs and Delaware legal community donors. [STAFF VERIFY Q1 filing details when available.]

⚡ **KATZ CONTRAST POINT:** Strategic note for Katz: Coons is well-funded and active on national security. Key vulnerabilities this cycle: DOGE/government spending reform (Katz has the reform credentials via his Delaware Senate restructuring legislation), Iran war posture (Katz's Commander-in-Chief authority stance is cleaner), ICE oversight (Katz's strong border enforcement position contrasts with Coons' caucus loyalties), and healthcare policy (Katz's home turf as a 40-year physician — per his platform, 'Patients Over Politics'). Near-term priority: Win the September 15 primary cleanly, build name ID in Sussex and Kent counties through Katz's VA medical facility proposal, and force Coons to defend his record rather than coast on incumbency.

Sources: Congress.gov · GovTrack · NPR · Coons.senate.gov · Ballotpedia · C-SPAN

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